



GROTON
IN
THE WITCHCRAFT TIMES.

BY
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GROTON, MASS.

1883.

UNIVERSITY PRESS:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

176960

TO

The Memory of my Ancestor,
THE REVEREND JOSEPH GREEN,
OF SALEM VILLAGE,

DURING WHOSE MINISTRY IN THAT PARISH THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION
WAS BROUGHT ABOUT, AFTER THE TERRIBLE
WITCHCRAFT TRAGEDY,

THIS CHAPTER IS INSCRIBED

BY THE WRITER.



GROTON

IN

THE WITCHCRAFT TIMES.



IN the early days of our history a belief in witchcraft, so far from being peculiar to Massachusetts, was held throughout Christendom. By no means confined to the ignorant or superstitious classes, it was entertained by educated and thoughtful men everywhere. It was a delusion for which the age was responsible, rather than any particular land or country. To us of to-day, with our light and experience, this state of affairs seems incredible; but perhaps a time may come when even some of our actions will need apologies and explanations.

In the autumn of 1671 a case of so-called witchcraft occurred at Groton, and the Reverend Samuel Willard, at that time the minister of the town, gave much attention and study to it. He wrote a long letter to Cotton Mather, giving the minutest details of the case, and Dr. Mather refers to it in his "*Magnalia Christi Americana*" (book vi. chapter vii. page 67). Two years later Mr. Willard published a volume of sermons entitled "*Useful Instructions for a professing People in Times of great Security and Degeneracy: delivered in several Sermons on Solemn Occasions.*" It consists

of three sermons, of which one was preached in consequence of this supposed manifestation of the Devil. The fame or notoriety of the case evidently had spread far and wide throughout the colony. Mr. Willard says:

There is a voice in it to the whole Land, but in a more especial manner to poor *Groton*: it is not a Judgement afar off, but it is near us, yea among us, God hath in his wisdom singled out this poor Town out of all others in this Wilderness, to dispense such an amazing Providence in, and therefore let us make a more near and special use of it: Let us look upon our selves to be set up as a *Beacon upon a Hill* by this Providence, and let those that hear what hath been done among us, hear also of the good effects, and reformation it hath wrought among us.

The victim of the witchcraft was one Elizabeth Knapp, who had the long train of symptoms which were then usually ascribed to the personal influence of the Evil One, but which nowadays would constitute a well-marked case of hysteria. She was the daughter of James and Elizabeth (Warren) Knapp, and born at Watertown, on April 21, 1655. Her father's house-lot was situated on the west side of Main Street, at the southerly end of the village; and the family were living, doubtless, on that site when the daughter was seized with the symptoms.

The original letter of Mr. Willard, describing the case, is still preserved, and is found numbered 3 in the second volume of the "Mather Papers" now at the Boston Public Library. It is written in a very small, cramped hand, and contained in four pages of manuscript, which is extremely difficult to read. It has been printed in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, volume viii., fourth series, pages 555-570; but the present copy is made independently of that one, and varies slightly from it. The letter is as follows:—

*A briefe account of a strange & unusuall Providence of God be-
fallen to Elizabeth Knap of Groton, p me Sam^{ll} Willard.*

THIS poore & miserable object, about a fortnight before shee was taken, wee observed to carry herselfe in a strange & unwonted manner, sometimes shee would give sudden shriekes, & if wee enquired a Reason, would alwayes put it off with some excuse, & then would burst forth into imoderate & extravagant laughter, in such wise, as some times shee fell onto y^e ground wth it : I my selfe observed oftentimes a strange change in here countenance, but could not suspect y^e true reason, but conceiued shee might bee ill, & y^rfore divers times enquired how shee did, & shee alwayes answered well ; w^{ch} made mee wonder : but the tragedye began to unfold itselfe upon Munday, Octob. 30. 71, after this maner (as I received by credible information, being that day my selfe gon from home). In the evening, a little before shee went to bed, sitting by y^e fire, shee cryed out, oh my legs ! & clapt her hand on y^m, immediately oh my breast ! & removed her hands thither ; & forthwith, oh I am strangled, & put her hands on her throat : those y^t observed her could not see what to make of it ; whither shee was in earnest or dissembled, & in this maner they left her (excepting y^e pson. y^t lay with her) complaining of her breath being stopt : The next day shee was in a strange frame, (as was observed by divers) sometimes weeping, sometimes laughing, & many foolish & apish gestures. In y^e evening, going into y^e cellar, shee shrieked suddenly, & being enquired of y^e cause, shee answered, y^t shee saw 2 psons in y^e cellar ; whereupon some went downe with her to search, but found none ; shee also looking with y^m ; at last shee turned her head, & looking one way stedfastly, used y^e exp^{ss}ion, w^t cheere old man ? which, they that were with her tooke for a fansye, & soe ceased ; afterwards (y^e same evening,) y^e rest of y^e family being in bed, shee was (as one lying in y^e roome saw, & shee herselfe also afterwards related) suddenly throwne downe into y^e midst of y^e floore wth violence, & taken with a violent fit, whereupon y^e whole family was raised, & with much adoe was shee kept out of y^e fire frō destroying herselfe after w^{ch} time she was followed wth fits from thence till y^e sabbath day ; in which shee was violent in bodily motions, leapings, strainings & strange agitations, scarce to bee held in bounds by the strength of 3 or 4 : violent alsoe in roarings & screamings,

¹⁶⁷¹
Oct. 30.

Oct. 31.

- rep^resenting a dark resemblance of hellish torm^{ts}, & frequently using in these fits divers words, sometimes crying out money, money, sometimes, sin & misery with other words. On wednesday, being in y^e time of intermission questioned about y^e case shee was in, wth reference to y^e cause or occasion of it, shee seemed to impeach one of y^e neighbo's, a pson (I doubt not) of sincere uprightness before God, as though either shee, or y^e devill in her likenesse & habit, pticularly her riding hood, had come downe y^e chimney, stricken her that night shee was first taken violently, w^{ch} was y^e occasion of her being cast into y^e floore; whereupon those about her sent to request y^e pson to come to her, who coming unwittingly, was at y^e first assaulted by her stranglye, for though her eyes were (as it were) sealed up (as they were alwayes, or for y^e most pt, in those fits, & soe continue in y^m all to this day) shee yet knew her very touch from any other, though no voice were uttered, & discovered it evidently by her gestures, soe powerfull were Satans suggestions in her, yet afterward God was pleased to vindicate y^e case & justifie y^e iñocent, even to remove jealousyes frō y^e spirits of y^e pty concerned, & satisfaction of y^e by standers; for after shee had gon to prayer wth her, shee confessed that she beleaved Satan had deluded her, & hath never since complained of any such apparition or disturbance from y^e pson. These fits continuing, (though wth intermission) divers, (when they had opportunity) p^ssed upon her to declare w^t might bee y^e true & real occasion of these amazing fits. Shee used many tergiversatioⁿ & excuses, p^ttending shee would to y^s & y^t young pson, who coming, she put it off to another, till at y^e last, on thurdsday night, shee brake forth into a large confession in y^e p^sence of many, y^e substance whereof amounted to thus much: That y^e devill had oftentimes appeared to her, p^senting y^e treaty of a Covenant, & p^ffering largely to her: viz. such things as suted her youthfull fancye, money, silkes, fine cloaths, ease from labo^r to show her y^e whole world, &c: that it had bin then 3 yeers since his first appearance, occasioned by her discontent: That at first his apparitions had bin more rare, but lately more frequent; yea those few weekes y^t shee had dwelt with us almost constant, that shee seldome went out of one roome into another, but hee appeared to her urging of her: & y^t hee had p^sented her a booke written wth blood of covenants made by others wth him, & told her such & such (of some wherof we hope better things) had a name there;
- Nov. 1.
- Nov. 2.

that hee urged upon her constant temptations to murder her pents. her neighbo's, our children, especially y^e youngest, tempting her to throw it into y^e fire, on y^e hearth, into y^e oven ; & that once hee put a bill hooke into her hand, to murder my selfe, psuading her I was asleep, but coming about it, shee met me on y^e staires at which shee was affrighted, the time I remember well, & observd a strange frame in her countenance & saw she endeav'ed to hide something, but I knew not what, neither did I at all suspect any such matter ; & y^e often he psuaded her to make away wth herselfe & once she was going to drowne herselfe in y^e well, for, looking into it, shee saw such sighs as allured her, & was gotten wth hin y^e curbe, & was by God's providence prevented, many other like things shee related, too tedious to recollect : but being p'ssed to declare whither she had not consented to a covenant wth y^e Devill, shee with solemne assertions deny'd it, yea asserted y^t shee had neuer soe much as consented to dis-co'se with him, nor had ever but once before y^t night used y^e exp'ssion, W^t cheere, old man ? & this argum^t shee used, y^t y^e providence of God had ordered it soe, y^t all his apparitions had bin frightfull to her ; yet this shee acknowledged, (which seemed contradictorie, viz :) y^e when shee came to our house to schoole, before such time as shee dwelt with us, shee delayed her going home in y^e evening, till it was darke, (w^{ch} wee observed) upon his psuasion to have his company home, & y^t shee could not, when hee appeared, but goe to him ; one evident testimony wherof wee can say something to, viz. y^e night before y^e Thanksgiving, Octob. 19. shee was with another maid y^t boarded in y^e house, wher oth of them saw y^e appearance of a mans head & shoulders, wth a great white neckcloath, looking in at y^e window, at which they came up affrighted both into y^e chamber, where y^e rest of us were, they declaring y^e case, one of us went downe to see who it might bee, but shee ran immediately out of y^e doore before him, which shee hath since confessed, was y^e Devill coming to her ; shee also acknowledged the reason of her former sudden shriekings, was from a sudden apparition, & that y^e devill put these excuses into her mouth, & bit her soe to say, & hurried her into those violent (but shee saith feigned & forced) laughters : shee then also complained against herselfe of many sins, disobedience to pents, neglect of attendance upon ordinances, attempts to murder herselfe & others ; but this pticular of a covenant shee utterly disclaimed : which relation seemed faire,

- especially in y^t it was attended wth bitter teares, selfe condemnations, good counsellis given to all about her, especially y^e youth yⁿ p^{re}s^{en}t, & an earnest desire of prayers: shee sent to Lancaster for M^r Rowlandson, who came & prayed with her, & gave her serious counsellis; but shee was still followed, all this notwithstanding, with these fits:
- Nov. 3. & in this state (coming home on fryday) I found her; but could get nothing from her, whenever I came in p^{re}s^{en}ce shee fell into those fits, concerning which fits, I find this noteworthy, shee knew & understood what was spoken to her, but could not answer, nor use any other words but y^e forementioned, money, &c: as long as y^e fit continued, for when shee came out of it, shee could give a relation of all y^t had been spoken to her: shee was demanded a reason why shee used those words in her fits, & signified that the Devill p^{re}s^{en}ted her with such things, to tempt her, & with sin & miserie, to terrifie her; shee also declared that shee had seene y^e Devills in y^r hellish shapes, & more Devills yⁿ any one there ever saw men in y^e world. Many of these things I heard her declare on Saturday at night: On y^e Sabbath the Physitian came, who judged a maine p^{ar}t of her distempr to be naturall, arising from the foulness of her stomacke, & corruptness of her blood, occasioning fumes in her braine, & strange fantasies; whereupon (in order to further tryall & administration) shee was removed home, & the succeeding weeke shee tooke physicke, & was not in such violence handled in her fits as before; but enjoyed an intermission, & gave some hopes of recovery; in which intermission shee was altogether sencelesse (as to our discoverye) of her state, held under securitye, & hardnesse of heart, p^{ro}fessing shee had no
- Nov. 8. trouble upon her spirits, shee cried satan had left her: A soleme day was kept wth her, yet it had then, (as I app^{re}hend,) little efficacy upon her; shee that day again exp^{re}s^{se}d hopes that y^e Devill had left her, but y^r was little ground to thinke soe, because she remained under such extreame sencelessnesse of her owne estate: & thus shee continued, being exercised with some moderate fits, in w^{ch} shee used none of y^e former exp^{re}s^{si}ons, but sometimes fainted away, sometimes used
- Nov. 15. some struglings, yet not with extremitye, till y^e Wednesday following, w^{ch} day was spent in prayer wth her, when her fits something more increased, & her tongue was for many houres together drawne into a semicircle up to y^e roofof her mouth, & not to be removed, for
- Nov. 16. some tried wth y^e fingers to doe it: frō thence till y^e sabbath seuen

night following: she continued alike, only shee added to former confessions, of her wise consenting to travell with y^e Devill in her company between Groton & Lancaster, who accompanied her in forme of a blacke dog wth eyes in his backe, sometimes stopping her horse, sometimes leaping up behind, & keeping her (when she came home wth company) 40 rod at least behind, leading her out of y^e way into a swampe, &c.: but still no conference would shee owne, but urged that the devills quarell with her was because shee would not seale a covenant wth him, & y^t y^e was y^e ground of her first being taken. besides this nothing observable came frō her, only one morning shee said God is a father, y^e next morning, God is my father, which words (it is to be feared) were words of p^rsumption, put into her mouth by y^e adversary. I suspecting the truth of her former storye, pressed, whether shee never verbally promised to covenant wth him, which shee stoutly denied: only acknowledged that shee had had some thoughts soe to doe: but on y^e forenamed Nov. 26. shee was again with violence & extremity seized by her fits, in such wise y^t 6 p^rsons could hardly hold her, but shee leaped & skipped about y^e house p^rforce roaring, & yelling extreamly, & fetching deadly sighs, as if her heartstrings would have broken, & looking wth a frightfull aspect, to y^e amazem^t & astonishm^t of all the beholders, of which I was an eye witness: The Physitian being then agen with her consented that y^e distemper was Diabolicall, refused further to administer, advised to extraordinary fasting; whereupon some of Gods ministers were sent for: shee meane while continued extreamly tormented night & day, till Tuesday about noon; having this added on Munday & Tuesday morning that shee barked like a dog, & bleated like a calfe, in w^{ch} her organs were visibly made use of: yea, (as was carefully observed) on Munday night, & Tuesday morning, when ever any came neere y^e house, though they within heard nothing at all, yet would shee barke till they were come into y^e house, on Tuesday, about 12 of y^e clocke, she came out of y^e fit, which had held her frō Sabbath day about y^e same time, at least 48 howers, wth little or no intermission, & then her speech was restored to her, & shee exp^rssed a great seeming sence of her state: many bitter teares, sighings, sobbings, complainings shee uttered, bewailing of many sins fore mentioned, begging prayers, & in y^e houre of prayer expressing much affection: I then p^rssed if y^t were anything behind in reference to y^e dealings between her & Satan,

Nov. 28.

when she agen p^fessed y^t shee had related all : & declared that in those fits the devill had assaulted her many wayes, that hee came downe y^e chimney, & shee essayed to escape him, but was siezed upon by him, that hee sat upon her breast, & used many arg^{ts} wth her, & y^t hee urged here at one time wth persuasions & promises, of ease, & great matters, told her y^t shee had done enough in w^t shee had already confessed, shee might henceforth serve him more securely ; anon told hir her time was past, & there was no hopes unlesse shee would serve him ; & it was observed in the time of her extremity, once when a little moments respite was granted her o^f speech, shee advised us to make o^f peace with God, & use o^f time better yⁿ shee had done, y^e p^{ty} advised her also to bethinke herselfe of making her peace, shee replied, it is too late for me : the next day was solemnized, wⁿ we had y^e presence of M^r Bulkley, M^r Rowlandson, & M^r Estabrooke, whither coming, we found her returned to a sottish & stupid kind of frame, much was prest upon her, but no affection at all discovered ; though shee was little o^r nothing x^ercised wth any fits, & her speech also continued : though a day or two after shee was melancholye & being enquired of a reason, shee complained y^t shee was grieved y^t so much pains were taken wth her, & did her no good, but this held her not long : & thus shee remained till Munday,

Nov. 29. when to some neighbo^rs there p^resent, shee related something more of he converse wth y^e devill, viz. That it had bin 5 yeers or therabouts, since shee first saw him, & declared methodically y^e sundry apparitions frō time to time, till shee was thus dreadfully assaulted, in which, y^e principall was, that after many assaults, shee had resolved to seale a covenant with Satan, thinking shee had better doe it, then be thus followed by him, that once, when shee lived at Lancaster, he p^resented himselfe, & desired of her blood, & shee would have done it, but wanted a knife, in y^e parley shee was prevented by the providence of God interposing my fater ; a 2^d time in y^e house hee met her, & p^resented her a knife, & as she was going about it my fater stept in agen & p^rvented, that when shee sough^t & enquired for y^e knife, it was not to bee found, & y^t afterward shee saw it sticking in y^e top of the barne, & some other like passages shee agen owned an observable passage w^{ch} shee also had confessed in her first declaration, but is not there inserted, viz. y^t y^e devill had often p^rffered her his service, but shee accepted not ; & once in p^{tic} : to bring her in chips for y^e fire,

Dec. 4.

shee refused, but when shee came in shee saw them lye by the fire side, & was affraid, & this I remarke, I sitting by y^e fire spake to her to lay y^m on, & she turned away in an unwonted manner: she then also declared a^{g^o} herselfe her unpfitable life she had led, & how justly God had thus pmitted Satan to handle her, telling them, they little knew w^t a sad case shee was in. I after asked her concerning these passages, & shee owned y^e truth of y^m, & declared y^t now shee hoped y^e devill had left her, but being prest whether there were not a covenant, she earnestly pessed, y^t by Gods goodnesse shee had bin pvented frō doing that, w^h shee of herselfe had been ready enough to assent to; & shee thanked God there was no such thing: The same day shee was agen taken w^h a new kind of unwonted fitt in which after shee had bin awhile exercised w^h violence, shee got her a sticke, & went up and downe, thrusting, & pushing, here & there, & anon looking out at a window, & cryed out of a witch appearing in a strange mañer in forme of a dog downward, w^h a womans head, & declared y^e pson, other whiles that shee appeard in her whole likenesse, & described her shape and habit: signified that shee went up y^e chimney & went her way: what impression wee re^de in y^e clay of y^e chimney, in similitude of a dogs paw, by y^e operation of Satan, & in y^e form of a dogs going in y^e same place she tould of, I shall not conclude, though something y^t was, as I myselfe saw in y^e chimney in y^e same place where shee declared y^t foot was set to goe up: In this mañer was she handled that night, & y^e 2 next dayes, using strange gestures, complaining by signes, when shee could not speake explaining that shee was sometimes in y^e chamber, somet. in y^e chimney, & anon assaults her, sometimes scratching her breast, beating her sides, strangling her throat, & she did oftentimes seeme to our apprehension as if shee would forthwith bee strangled: She declared y^t if y^e pty were apprehended shee should forthwith bee well, but never till yⁿ; whereupon her father went, & pured y^e coming of y^e woman impeached by her, who came downe to her on Thursdays night, where (being desired to be p^sent) I observed y^t she was violently handled, & lamentably tormented by y^e adversarye, & uttered unu^oal shriekes at y^e instant of y^e psons coming in, though her eyes were fast closed: but having experience of such former actings, wee made nothing of it, but waited y^e issue: God therefore was sought to, to signifie something. whereby y^e innocent might bee acquitted, or y^e guilty dis-

Dec. 7.

covered, & hee Answered o' prayers, for by 2 evident & cleere mistakes she was cleered, & then all p'judices ceased, & she never more to this day hath impeached her of any apparition: in y^e forementioned allegation of y^e p'son, shee also signified y^t somet. y^e devil alsoe in y^e likenesse of a little boy appeared together wth y^e p'son: Fryday
 Dec. 8. was a sad day wth her, for shee was sorely handled wth fits, which some p'ceiving pressed that y^t was something yet behind not discovered by her; & shee after a violent fit, holding her betweene two & 3 houres did first to one, & afterwards to many acknowledge that shee had given of her blood to y^e Devill, & made a covenant wth him, whereupon I was sent for to her; & understanding how things had passed, I found that there was no roome for privacye, in another alredy made by her soe publicke, I therefore examined her concerning the matter; & found her not soe forward to confesse, as shee had bin to others, yet thus much I gathered frō her confession:

That after shee came to dwell wth us, one day as shee was alone in a lower roome, all y^e rest of us being in y^e chamber, she looked out at y^e window, & saw y^e devill in y^e habit of an old man, coming over a great meadow lying neere the house; & suspecting his designe, shee had thoughts to have gon away, yet at length resolved to tarry it out, & heare w^t hee had to say to her; when hee came hee demanded of her some of her blood, which shee forthwith consented to, & with a knife cut her finger, hee caught y^e blood in his hand, & then told her she must write her name in his booke, shee answered, shee could not write, but hee told her he w^{ld} direct her hand, & then took a little sharpened sticke, & dipt in the blood, & put it into her hand, & guided it, & shee wrote her name with his helpe: what was the matter shee set her hand to, I could not learne from her; but thus much shee confessed, that the terme of time agreed upon with him was for 7 yeers; one yeere shee was to be faithfull in his service, & then y^e other six hee would serve her, & make her a witch: shee also related, y^t y^e ground of contest between her & y^e devill which was y^e occasion of this sad providence, was this, y^t after her covenant made the devill showed her hell & y^e daēd, & told her if shee were not faithfull to him, shee should goe thither, & bee tormented there; shee desired of him to show her heaven, but hee told her y^t heaven was an ougly place, & that none went thither but a company of base roagues whom he hated; but if shee w^{ld} obey him, it should be well with her:

but afterward shee considered with herselfe, that the terme of her coven^t, was but short, & would soone bee at an end, & shee doubted (for all y^e devills p^mises) shee must at last come to y^e place hee had showne her, & withall, feared, if shee were a witch, shee should bee discovered, & brought to a shamefull end; which was many times a trouble on her spirits; this the Devill p^cceiving, urged upon her to give him more of her blood, & set her hand agen to his booke, which shee refused to doe, but p^tly through promises, p^tly by threatnings, hee brought her at last to a promise y^t she^e would sometime doe it: after which hee left not incessantly to urge her to y^e p^fformance of it, once hee met her on the staires. & often elsewhere pressing her with vehemencye, but shee still put it off; till the first night shee was taken when y^e devill came to her, & told her he would not tarry any longer: shee told him shee would not doe it hee Answered shee had done it already, & w^t further damage would it bee to doe it agen, for shee was his sure enough: she rejoyned shee had done it already, & if shee were his sure enough, what need hee to desire any more of her: whereupon hee stricke her y^e first night, agen more violently y^e 2d as is above exp^t: This is y^e summe of y^e Relation I then had frō her: which at that time seemed to bee methodicall: These things she uttered with great affection, overflowing of teares, & seeming bitterness: I asked of the Reason of her weeping & bitterness, shee complained of her sinns, & some in p^ticular, profanation of the sabbath &c: but nothing of this sin of renouncing y^e govern^t of God. & giving herselfe up to y^e devill: I therfore, (as God helped) applied it to her & asked her whether shee desired not prayers with & for her, shee assented with earnestnesse, & in prayer seemed to bewaile the sin as God helped, then in y^e aggravation of it, & afterward declared a desire to rely on y^e power & mercy of God in Christ: shee then also declared, that y^e Devill had deceived her concerning those p^{er}sons impeached by her, that hee had in their likenesse or resemblance tormented her, p^{er}suading her that it was they, that they bare her a spleen, but he loved her, & would free her from them, & pressed on her to endeavor to bring them forth to y^e censure of y^e law. In this case I left her; but (not being satisfied in some things) I promised to visit her agen y^e next day which accordingly I did, but coming to her, I found her (though her speech still remained) in a case sad enough, her teares dried up, & senses stupified, & (as was observed) when I

Dec. 10.

could get nothing from her, & therefore applyed myselfe in counsell to her, shee regarded it not, but fixed her eye steadfastly upon a place, as shee was wont when y^e Devill p^rsented himselfe to her, which was a grieffe to her p^rents, & brought mee to a stand; in y^e condition I left her: The next day, being y^e Sabbath, whither upon any hint given her, or any advantage Satan tooke by it upon her, shee sent for mee in hast at noone, coming to her, shee immediately with teares told me y^t shee had belied the Devill, in saying shee had given him of her blood: &c: professed y^t y^e most of y^e apparitions shee had spoken of were but fansyes, as images rep^rsented in a dreame; earnestly entreated me to beleve her, called God to witnesse to her assertion, I told her I would willingly hope y^e best, & beleve what I had any good grounds to app^rhend; if therefore shee would tell a more methodicall relation yⁿ y^e former, it would be well, but if otherwise, she must bee content y^t every one should censure according to their app^rension, shee promised soe to doe, & expressed a desire y^t all y^t would might heare her; y^t as they had heard soe many lyes & untruths, y^v might now heare y^e truth, & engaged y^t in y^e evening shee would doe it; I then repaired to her, & divers more then went; shee then declared thus much, that the Devill had sometimes appeared to her; y^t y^e occasion of it was her discontent, that her condition displeased her, her labo^r was burdensome to her, shee was neither content to bee at home nor abroad; & had oftentime strong p^rsuasions to practice in witchcraft, had often wished y^e Devill would come to her at such & such times, & resolved y^t if hee would, shee would give herselfe up to him soule & body: but (though hee had oft times appeared to her, yet) at such times hee had not discovered himselfe, and therefore shee had bin p^rserved frō such a thing: I declared a suspicion of y^e truth of y^e relation, & gave her some Reasons; but by Reason of y^e company did not say much, neither could anything further be gotten from her: but y^e next day I went to her, & opened my mind to her alone, & left it with her, declared (among other things) y^t shee had used p^rposterous courses, & therefore it was no marvell y^t shee had bin led into such contradictions, & tendered her all y^e helpe I could, if shee would make use of me, & more privately relate any weighty & serious case of Conscience to me, shee promised me shee would if shee knew any thing, but said y^t then shee knew nothing at all; but stood to y^e story shee had told y^e foregoing evening: & indeed w^t to make

of these things I at p'sent know not, but am waiting till God (if hee see meet) wind up y^e story, & make a more cleere discoverye. It was not many dayes ere shee was hurried agen into violent fits after a different manner, being taken agen speechlesse, & using all endeavo's to make away wth herselfe, & doe mischief unto others; striking those y^t held her; spitting in their faces; & if at any time shee had done any harme or frightened them shee would laugh immediately; which fits held her sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, few occasions shee had of speech, but when shee could speake, shee complained of a hard heart, counselled some to beware of sin, for that had brought her to this, bewailed y^t soe many prayers had bin put up for her, & shee still so hard hearted, & no more good wrought upon her; but being asked whither shee were willing to repent, shaked her head, & said nothing. Thus shee continued till y^e next sabbath in y^e afternoone; on which day in y^e morning, being something better then at other times, shee had but little company tarried with her in y^e afternoon; when y^e Devill began to make more full discoverye of himselfe: It had bin a question before, whither shee might p'ply bee called a Demoniacke, or pson possessed of y^e Devill, but it was then put out of Question: hee began (as y^e psons with her testifie) by drawing her tongue out of her mouth most frightfully to an extraordinary length & greatness, & many amazing postures of her bodye; & then by speaking, vocally in her, whereupon her father, & another neighbo' were called frō y^e meeting, on whom, (as soon as they came in,) he railed, calling them roagues, charging them for folly in going to heare a blacke roague, who told y^m nothing but a pcell of lyes, & deceived them, & many like exp'ssions. after exercise I was called, but understood not y^e occasion, till I came, & heard y^e same voice, a grum, low, yet audible voice it was, y^e first salutation I had was, oh! you are a great roague, I was at y^e first something daunted & amazed, & many reluctances I had upon my spirits, which brought mee to a silence and amazement in my spirits, till at last God heard my groanes & gave me both refreshment in Christ, & co'age: I then called for a light, to see whither it might not appeare a counterfiet, and observed not any of her organs to moove, y^e voice was hollow, as if it issued out of her throat; hee then agen called me great blacke roague, I challenged him to make it appear; but all y^e Answer was, you tell y^e people a company of lyes: I reflected on myselfe, & could not but

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- magnifye y^e goodnesse of God not to suffer Satan to bespatter y^e names of his pple, with those sins which hee himselfe hath pdoned in y^e blood of Christ. I Answered, Satan, thou art a liar, and a deceiver, & God will vindicate his owne truth one day: hee Answered nothing directly, but said, I am not Satan, I am a pretty blacke boy; this is my pretty girle; I have bin here a great while, I sat still, and Answered nothing to these expressions; but when hee directed himselfe to mee agen, oh! you blacke roague, I doe not love you: I replied 'through God's grace, I hate thee; hee rejoined, but you had better love mee; these manner of exp'sions filled some of y^e company there p'sent wth great consternation, others put on boldnesse to speake to him, at which I was displeased, & advised them to see their call cleere, fearing least by his policie, & many apish exp'ssions hee used, hee might insinuate himselfe, & raise in them a fearlesnesse of spirit of him: I no sooner turned my backe to goe to y^e fire, but he called out agen, where is that blacke roague gon: I seeing little good to bee done by disco'se, & questioning many things in my mind concerning it, I desired y^e company to joyne in prayer unto God; when wee went about y^e duty & were kneeled downe, with a voice louder then before something, hee cryed out, hold your tongue, hold your tongue, get you gon you blacke roague, what are you going to doe, you have nothing to doe with me, &c: but through Gods goodnesse was silenced, &, shee lay quiet during y^e time of prayer, but as soone as it was ended, began afresh, using y^e former exp'ssions, at which some ventured to speake to him: Though I thinke imprudentlye: one told him, God had him in chaines, hee replied, for all my chaine, I can knocke thee on y^e head when I please: hee said hee would carry her away y^e night, Another Answered, but God is stronger than thou, He p'sently rejoined, that 's a ly, I am stronger than God: at which blasphemy I agen advised them to bee wary of speaking, counselled y^m to get serious p'sons to watch with her, & left her, commending her to God: On Tuesday following shee confessed that y^e Devill entred into her y^e 2d night after her first taking, that when shee was going to bed, hee entred in (as shee conceived) at her mouth, & had bin in her ever since, & professed, that if there were ever a Devill in y^e world, there was one in her, but in what manner he spake in her she could not tell: On Wednesday night, shee must forthwith be carried downe to y^e bay in all hast, shee should never be well, till an assembly of
- Dec. 19.
- Dec. 20.

ministers was met together to pray with & for her, & in particular Mr Cobbet: her friends advised with me about it; I signified to y^m, y^t I apprehended, Satan never made any good motion, but it was out of season, & y^t it was not a thing now fiezable, the season being then extreame cold, & y^e snow deepe, y^t if shee had bin taken in y^e woods wth her fits shee must needs pish: On friday in y^e evening shee was taken agen violently, & then y^e former voice (for y^e sound) was heard in her agen, not speaking, but imitating y^e crowing of a cocke, accompanied with many other gestures, some violent, some ridiculous, which occasioned my going to her, where by signes she signified y^t y^e Devill threatened to carry her away that night, God was agen then sought for her. & when in prayer, y^t expression was used, y^t God had proved Satan a liar, in preserving her once when hee had threatned to carry her away that night, & was entreated soe to doe agen, y^e same voice, which had ceased 2 dayes before, was agen heard by y^e by-standers 5 times distinctly to cry out, oh you are a roague, and yⁿ ceased: but y^e whole time of prayer, sometimes by violence of fits sometimes by noises shee made, shee drowned her owne hearing frō receiving our petition, as she afterwards confessed: Since y^t time shee hath continued for the most p^t speechlesse, her fits coming upon her sometimes often, sometimes with greater intermission, & with great varieties in y^e manner of them, sometimes by violence, sometimes by making her sicke, but (through Gods goodnesse) soe abated in violence, y^t now one pson can as well rule her, as formerly 4 or 5: She is observed alwayes to fall into her fits when any strangers goe to visit her, & y^e more goe y^e more violent are her fits: as to y^e frame of her spirits shee hath bin more averse lately to good counsell than heretofore, yet sometime shee signifyes a desire of y^e companie of ministers. On Thursday last, in y^e evening, shee came a season to her speech, & (as I received frō them with her) agen disowned a Coven^t wth y^e Devill, disowned y^t relation about the knife fore mentioned, declared y^e occasion of her fits to bee discontent, owned y^e temptations to murder; declared that though y^e devill had power of her body, shee hoped hee should not of her soule, y^t she had rather continue soe speechlesse, yⁿ have her speech, & make no better use of it yⁿ formerly shee had, expressed y^t shee was sometimes disposed to doe mischief, & was as if some had laid hold of her to enforce her to it, & had double strength to her owne, y^t shee knew not whither y^e devill

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Jan. 11.

Jan. 12.

were in her or no if hee were shee knew not when or how he entered ; that when shee was taken speechlesse, she fared as if a string was tyed about y^e roots of her tongue, & reached doune into her vitalls, & pulled her tongue downe, & yⁿ most when shee strove to speake : On Fryday, in y^e evening shee was taken wth a passion of weeping, & sighing, which held her till late in y^e night, at length she sent for me ; but y^e unseasonableness of y^e weather, & my owne bodily indisposednesse p^rvented : I went y^e next morning, when shee strove to speake somthing but could not, but was taken wth her fits, which held her as long as I tarried, which was more yⁿ an houre, & I lett her in them : & thus she continues speechlesse to this instant, Jan. 15. & followed wth fits : concerning which state of hers I shall suspend my owne Judgment, & willingly leave it to y^e censure of those y^e are more learned, aged, & Judicious : only I shall leave my thoughts in resp. of 2 or 3 questions w^{ch} have risen about her : viz. 1. Whither her distemper be reale or counterfiet : I shall say no more to y^e but this, the great strength appearing in y^m, & great weaknesse after them, will disclaime y^e contrary opinion : for thō a pson may counterfiet much, yet such a strength is beyond y^e force of dissimulation : 2. Whither her distemp^r bee naturall or Diabolicall, I suppose y^e p^rmisses will strongly enough co^r lude y^e latter, yet I will adde these 2 further argum^{ts} : 1. y^e actings of convulsion, w^{ch} these come nearest to, are (as psons acquainted wth y^m observe) in many, yea y^e most essentiall pts of y^m quite contrary to these actings : 2. Shee hath no wayes wasted in body, or strength by all these fits, though soe dreadfull, but gathered flesh exceedinglye, & hath her naturall strength when her fits are off, for y^e most pt : 3. Whither y^e Devill did really speake in her : to y^e point w^{ch} some have much doubted of, thus much I will say to countermand this app^rhension : 1. The manner of exp^rssion I diligently observed, & could not p^rceive any organ, any instrument of speech (which y^e philosopher makes mention of) to have any motion at all, yea her mouth was sometimes shut without opening sometimes open without shutting or moving, & then both I & others saw her tongue (as it used to be when shee was in some fits, when speechlesse) turned up circularly to the roo^fe of her mouth. 2. y^e labial letters, divers of which were used by her, viz. B. M. P. which cañot be naturally exp^rssed without motion of y^e lips, which must needs come within o^r ken, if observed, were uttered wthot any such motion,

if shee had used only Lingualls, Gutturalls &c: y^e matter might have bin more suspicious: 3. y^e reviling termes yⁿ used, were such as shee never used before nor since, in all this time of her being thus taken: yea, hath bin alwayes observed to speake respectively concerning mee; 4. They were exp^ssions which y^e devill (by her confession) aspersed mee, & others wthall, in y^e houre of temptation, p^ticularly shee had freely acknowledged y^t y^e Devill was wont to appear to her in y^e house of God & divert her mind, & charge her shee should not give eare to what y^t Blacke coated roage spake: 5 wee observed when the voice spake, her throat was swelled formidably as big at least as ones fist: These argum^{ts} I shall leave to y^e censure of y^e Judicious: 4. whither shee have covenanted wth y^e Devill or noe: I thinke this is a case unanswerable, her declarations have been soe contradictorye, one to another, y^t wee know not w^t to make of y^m, & her condition is such as administers many doubts; charity would hope y^e best, love would alsoe feare y^e worst, but thus much is cleare, shee is an object of pitye, & I desire y^t all y^t heare of her wthl compassionate her forlorne state, Shee is (I question not) a subject of hope, & therefore all meanes ought to bee used for her recoverye, Shee is a monum^t of divine severitye, & the Lord grant y^t all y^t see or heare, may feare & tremble: Amen.

S. W.

During the witchcraft excitement at Salem, in the year 1692, no man of that day did more to expose the wicked character of the examinations and convictions than Thomas Brattle, of Boston. His good sense, and regard for truth and justice, are shown in a letter written at that time, though not published for more than a century later. It is found in the fifth volume of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the writer thus mentions Elizabeth Knapp's case:—

I cannot but admire [wonder] that these afflicted persons should be so much countenanced and encouraged in their accusations as they are: I often think of the Groton woman, that was afflicted, an account of which we have in print [in Mr. Willard's sermon], and is a

most certain truth, not to be doubted of. I shall only say, that there was as much ground, in the hour of it, to countenance the said Groton woman, and to apprehend and imprison, on her accusations, as there is now to countenance these afflicted persons, and to apprehend and imprison on their accusations. But furthermore, it is worthy of our deepest consideration, that in the conclusion, (after multitudes have been imprisoned, and many have been put to death), these afflicted persons should own that all was a mere fancy and delusion of the devil's, as the Groton woman did own and acknowledge with respect to herself; if, I say, in after times, this be acknowledged by them, how can the justices, judges, or any else concerned in these matters, look back upon these things without the greatest of sorrow and grief imaginable? I confess to you, it makes me tremble when I seriously consider of this thing. I have heard that the chief judge¹ has expressed himself very hardly of the accused woman at Groton, as though he believed her to be a witch to this day: but by such as knew the said woman, this is judged a very uncharitable opinion of the said judge, and I do not understand that any are proselyted thereto. (Pages 73, 74.)

Thomas Hutchinson, in the "History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay" (Boston, 1767), refers to this case and says: —

In 1671, Elizabeth Knapp, another *ventriloqua*, alarmed the people of Groton in much the same manner as Ann Cole had done those of Hartford; but her daemon was not so cunning, for instead of confining himself to old women, he rail'd at the good minister of the town and other persons of good character, and the people could not then be prevailed on to believe him, but believed the girl, when she confessed she had been deluded, and that the devil had tormented her in the shape of good persons; and so she escaped the punishment due to her fraud and imposture. (ii. 17.)

Samuel G. Drake, in his "Annals of Witchcraft in New England" (Boston, 1869), also mentions the case of Elizabeth Knapp, and says: —

¹ William Stoughton, Lieutenant-Governor.

This Story has been given to show how, in those Times, a tolerably severe Case of Hysterics could be magnified by those who had an exceedingly large Maggot of Credulity in their Brains. Groton is only thirty-three Miles from Boston, but the Story, in travelling even that short Distance, had no Doubt swollen into such Proportions, as to have but a faint Likeness to the Original.

The Condition of Elizabeth Knap was probably very similar to that of Elizabeth Barton (the Holy Maid of Kent), who, for her Pretensions to Inspiration, "Convulsions and strange Motions of Body," was put to Death in the Time of Henry the Eighth, 1584. (Pages 132, 133.)

John Willard, who was hung as a witch at Salem on August 19, 1692, had previously lived in Groton. The papers relating to his arrest and trial are still on file in the office of the clerk of the courts for Essex County at Salem, and give many particulars of the unfortunate affair. They are found in the first volume of "Witchcraft Papers," and numbered from 91 to 107 inclusive. The trial was held before a special term of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, of which the records are now lost.

A warrant for Willard's arrest was issued on May 10, 1692, addressed "To y^e Constable of Salem" and put in the hands of John Putnam, Jr., who made a return dated May 12, that he "went to the house of the Vsual abode of John Willards and made search for him, and in seuerall other houses and places butt could not find him; and his relatione and friends then gaue mee accompt that to their best knowledge he was fled."

Seven indictments were found against him and the original copies of four of them are still in existence. These all charge him with practising his sorceries on various spinsters.

According to Robert Calef, in his "More Wonders of the Invisible World" (London, 1700): —

John Willard, had been employed to fetch in several that were accused; but taking dissatisfaction from his being sent, to fetch up

some that he had better thoughts of, he declined the Service, and presently after he himself was accused of the same Crime, and that with such vehemency, that they sent after him to apprehend him; he had made his Escape as far as *Nashawag*, about 40 Miles from *Salem*; yet 'tis said those Accusers did then presently tell the exact time, saying, now *Willard* is taken. (Page 104.)

It will be noticed that Calef leaves it to be inferred that Willard was arrested at *Nashawag*, which is another form of *Nashua*, and an old name of *Lancaster*. The *Nashua* River is sometimes called the *Nashawag*, in the early records of Groton. Mr. Upham, in his "*Salem Witchcraft*" (Boston, 1867), says definitely that Willard "was seized in Groton" (ii. 173); but I do not find his authority for the statement. *Lancaster* may have been the place of his arrest. Willard had previously lived at Groton, which was then a frontier town; and after his flight from *Salem* he would naturally have gone thither.

The following are copies of some of the original papers: —

Anno Regni Regis et Reginae et Mariae nunc Angliae, &c. Quarto.

Essex ss

The Juro^{rs} for our Sovereigne Lord and Lady the King & Queen pr^sents that John Willard of Salem Village in the County of Essex husb. the Eighteenth day of May in the ffourth year of the Reigne of our Sovereigne Lord and Lady William & Mary by the Grace of God of England Scotland ffraunce & Ireland King & Queen Defenders of the ffaith &c: Divers other Dayes & times as well before as after, certaine detestable arts called Witchcrafts & Sorceries wickedly & feloniously hath vsed, Practised & Exercised at & within the Towne of Salem in the County of Essex afores^d in. vpon. and ag^t one Mercy Lewis of Salem Village afores^d in the County afores^d single woman by which said wicked arts the s^d Mercy Lewis the s^d Eighteenth Day of May in the ffourth year aboves^d and divers other Dayes & times as well before as after was & is hurt, tortured afflicted consumed Pined wasted & tormented, ag^t the Peace of our Sovereigne Lord &

Lady the King & Queen. and ag^t the forme of the Statute in that case made & Provided

Witnesses

Mercy Lewis
Abigail Williams
Mary Walcott
Susanna Sheldon
Ann Putnam Sen^r
Ann Putnam Jun^r
Elizabeth Hubbard

Another warrant was issued on May 15, 1692: "To The Marshall of the County of Essex or to the Constables in Salem or any other Marshal or Marshalls Constable or Constables within this their Majes Colony or Terretory of the Massachusetts in New England."

This warrant was "To be prosecuted according to the direction of Constable John putnam of Salem Village who goes with the same."

The following endorsement is made on the paper: —

I haue apprehended John Wilard of Salam Veleg acorden to the tener of this warrant and brought him before your worsheps Date 18 May 1692

by me. John Putnam Constoble of Salam

The Deposition of Samuel Parris aged about . 39 . years, & Nathanell Ingersoll aged about fifty & eight yeares & also Thomas Putman aged about forty yeares all of Salem —

testifyeth & saith that Eliz : Hubbard, Mary Warren & Ann Putman & John Indian were exceedingly tortured at the examination of John Willard of Salem Husbandman, before the honoured Magistrates the . 18 . May . 1692 . & also that upon his looking upon Eliz : Hubbard she was knockt down, & also that some of the afflicted & particularly Susannah Sheldon then & there testified that they saw a black man whispering him in the ear, & that said Sheldon could not come near to said Willard but was knockt down, and also that Mary

Warren in a fit being carried to him the said Willard she said Warren was presently well upon his grasping her arm, & farther that severall of the afflicted also then testified, that divers of those he had murdered then rose up against him, & farther that he could by no means rightly repeat the Lords Prayer thō he made manifold assayes.

Mr. Samuel Parris and Nathanael Ingersoll and : thomas putnam did upon the oath which they had taken did before us the Juris of inquest owne this thar testimony : this 3. day of June : 92 :

Sworn in Court by Mr Parris & Tho : Putman

june the . 3 . 1692 :

Sarah Vibber aged 36 yeares or thear abouts testifie and saith the befor Jn^r Welard was exammend at the uilleg I being in Lef^r Engorsols Chambor I saw y^e aporition of john willard com to mary wolcot & marcy luis & hurt them griuosly & almost choked Them Then I tould of it & emediatly y^e said wiliard fel upon me & tormented me greuesly & pinched me. & threw me down

Sarah uibber : ownid this har testimony before us the Jurriars for Inqwest : this . 3. of June : 1692

Jurat in Curia

The depositio.. of Lydia Necols aged . 46 yeares and of Margaret Knight . aged . 20 . yeares who testefy and say.

That the wife of John Willard being at her fathers house when the said Willard liued at Groten . she made a lamentable complaynt . how cruelty her husband had beaten her . she thought her selfe that she should neuer recouer of the blows he had giuen her : the next morninge he was got into a litle hcle vnder the stayres . and then she thought some thinge extra ordinary had befallen him then he ran out at the doore : and ran up . a steep hill . almost imposable for any man to run vp : as she sayd : then she tooke her mare and rid away . fearing some euil had ben intended agaynst her . and when she came to the house of Henery or Beniamin Willard she told how it was with her and the sayd Henery Willard or both went to looke after him and met him comeinge in a strange distracted frame

The deposition of Thomas Baly aged 36 yeares who testefieth and sayth.

That I being at Groaton some short tyme after John Willard. as the report went, had beaten his wife I went to cal him home and comeinge home with him in the night I heard such a hideous noyse of strang creatures I was much affrighted for I never had heard the like noyse I fearinge they might be some euil spirits I enquired of the said Willard what might it be that made such a hideous noyse the sayd Willard sayd they ware Locust: the next day as I suppose the sayd Willards wife with a younge child and her mother being vpon my mare. ridinge between Groaton Mil and Chensford. they. being willing to goe on foote a litle desired me to ride: then I taking my mare being willing to let her feed a litle: there as I remember I aprehend I heard the same noyse agayne where at my mare started and got from me.

Jurat in Curia

The testomony of Rebeckah Wilkins aged nineteen years Doe testifie that 29th July at night shee se John Wilard seting in the Conner and hee said that hee wold afflick me that night and forthwith hee ded afflick me: and the nax day I ded se him afflick me soer by Choaking & Polling one ear into Peases the nex day being the Lords day I being Going to meting I se John Wilard and hee afflictked me uery soer

Jurat in Curia

The deposition of Henery Wilknes sen aged 41 yeares who testi-fieth and sayth that vpon the third of May last John Willard came to my house: and uery earnestly entreated me to go with him to Boston w^{ch} I at lenght consented to go with him, my Son Daniel comeinge and vnderstandinge I was goinge with him to Boston. and seemed to be much troubled that I would go with the sayd Willard: and he sayd he thought it were wel. If the sayd Willard were hanged: w^{ch} made me admire for I neuer heard such an expression come from him to any one beinge since he came to yeares of discretion, but after I was gone in a few days he was taken sicke: and grew euery day worse & worse where vpon we made application to a physitian who affirmed his sicknes was by some preter natural cause & would make no application of any phisicke. Some tymes after this our neighbours comeing to visit my son Mercy Lewis came wth them and

affirmed that she saw the apparition of John Willard afflicting him : quickly after came An Putnam, and she saw the same apparition and then my eldest daughter was taken in a sad manner & the sayd An : saw the sayd Willard afflicting her. at Another tyme mercy lewes and mary Walcott came to visit him, and they saw the same apparition of Willard afflicting him, and this not but a little tyme before his death.

Sworne in Court

John Willard was tried on the 5th of August and hung on the 19th. Three other men and one woman were executed at the same time for witchcraft; one of whom was the Reverend George Burroughs. They all were convicted on the same kind of absurd and flimsy testimony as that given in the depositions against Willard. They were allowed no counsel for defence, and their execution was nothing short of judicial murder. Under the gallows Mr. Burroughs made a speech, declaring his innocence, and also a prayer which he ended by repeating correctly the Lord's Prayer. This produced a great effect on the multitude, as it was then the common belief that a witch or wizard could not say it without blundering. The sympathy of the crowd was so much excited that the leaders of the wicked movement began to fear lest the executions would be prevented; and Cotton Mather, mounted on horseback, addressed the assemblage and told them that the punishment was a righteous one.

Mr. Upham, in his "Salem Witchcraft," says: —

John Willard appears to have been an honest and amiable person, an industrious farmer, having a comfortable estate, with a wife and three young children. He was a grandson of Old Bray Wilkins; whether by blood or marriage, I have not been able to ascertain. The indications are that he married a daughter of Thomas or Henry Wilkins, most probably the former, with both of whom he was a joint possessor of lands. He came from Groton; and it is for local antiquaries to discover whether he was a relative of the Rev. Samuel Willard of Boston. If so, the fact would shed much light upon our story. (ii. 321.)

After a careful investigation I cannot discover any kinship between the Reverend Samuel Willard and John, though there may have been a remote one. Lydia Nichols and Margaret Knight, according to their depositions, were acquainted with Henry and Benjamin Willard, of Groton, both sons of the minister, and these men knew John Willard. The Reverend Mr. Willard, who had carefully studied Elizabeth Knapp's case twenty years before the Salem tragedy, evidently believed in the demoniacal origin of witchcraft, though he held moderate views on the subject. In a pamphlet written by him, entitled "Some Miscellany Observations on our present Debates respecting Witchcrafts," and printed in the year 1692, he takes the ground that there are witches in New England, and they ought to be punished.

In passing judgment on the authors of this monstrous delusion, let us not forget the fact that witchcraft was recognized as a crime in the colonial and provincial laws of Massachusetts, following those of England; and let us remember, too, that many of the wisest and best men at that period looked upon it as a sin against God which should be punished in accordance with the Mosaic law.

Sir William Blackstone, in his "Commentaries on the Laws of England" (Boston, 1818), says

To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God, in various passages both of the old and new testament: and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws; which at least suppose the possibility of a commerce with evil spirits. (iv. 60.)